

The inside track on spring

BY LINDSEY M. ROBERTS

When everything is coming up roses outside, it shouldn't still feel like the dead of winter inside. With spring on our doorstep, we went searching for expert advice on decorating with poppies, magnolia branches, wisteria, roses and more in prints and patterns.

"We love our gardens in Britain, our English classic country gardens, and the weather doesn't always allow us to sit in them," says Suzanne Imre, editor of the design magazine *Livingetc*. But what's ephemeral in nature becomes enduring indoors. "Bringing them into the house means we can enjoy that country feel no matter what the weather is." Imre reports that floral prints are being given a grittiness with bugs and weeds, and modernized through digital printing, oversize blooms, creative cropping, bold colors and, conversely, tone-on-tone colors. Plus, there's a renewed interest in Britain's storied archives of Liberty of London fabrics and botanical drawings.

For Americans with modern tastes and aversions to feminine furnishings, Washington area designers David Mitchell and Celia Welch suggest adding a touch of softness. "I don't know anyone who doesn't enjoy, during the first week of April, getting a big vase of flowers to bring home," Mitchell says. "There's a beauty about bringing warmth and nature into your house in the cold winter. A floral fabric would do the same thing."

washingtonpost.com

Chat Thursday at 11 a.m. Annie Sloan, whose Chalk Paint helped start a furniture-painting revolution, joins staff writer Jura Koncius for our weekly online Q&A on decorating and household advice. Submit questions at washingtonpost.com/home.

Gallery See more photos of springlike floral furniture and accessories.

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● To warm up a modern interior with floral prints without going granny, Welch recommends concentrating your efforts on one statement. Try an accent wall of floral wallpaper, for example, or a bold floral print on a pillow or chair, as on the Lotus Blossom Wingback Chair (\$1,398, www.anthropologie.com).

ANTHROPOLOGIE



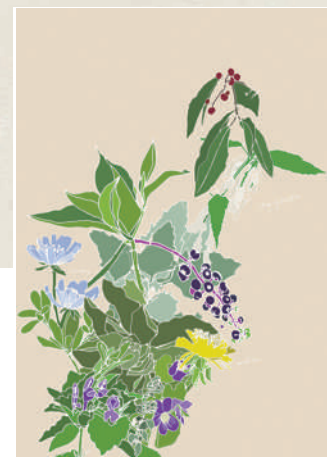
● "I think people shy away from florals because they're kind of precious — but there's a new age of florals," Welch says. Try adding one floral item for some softness, such as this hand-beaded peacock-and-floral Cream Peacock Bench, a traditional piece updated with crisp teal, lime and fuchsia. It would add a flourish to an otherwise streamlined interior (\$1,499, www.horchow.com).

HORCHOW



RIFLE PAPER CO.

● "Modern homes can look quite minimal and sleek and very restful on the eye, but sometimes they do need a little bit of personality and pattern, and that's where florals can come in," Imre says. For a fresh spring update that requires little commitment, there's Rifle Paper Co.'s Botanical Coaster Set (\$16, www.riflepaperco.com). In peach, rose, vintage blue and peacock blue backgrounds, the set of eight pulp-board coasters features designs reminiscent of the folk art found on the narrow boats that travel the English canals.



LITTLEPAPERPLANES

● To avoid seeming dated and stuffy, Imre suggests finding patterns that are gritty or unexpected (for instance, flowers that are realistic, bugs and all). She likes this "edgy" print by Renee Garner, the "Unlikely Garden Print" (\$30, www.littlepaperplanes.com). "The coolest thing is, the flowers are actually weeds," she says.



C. WONDER

● After years of black-and-white photography dominating artwork in homes, Imre says we're ready for something with more life. British designers, especially, are tapping into their rich history of botanical drawings for inspiration. C. Wonder's gicleé Botanical Wall Art (\$118, www.cwonder.com) would lend a natural touch to a salon-style arrangement.

● Janus et Cie is a source that Welch turns to time and again for accent pieces that are beautiful but "unusual" — especially the company's pots and vases. She picked out the Ambition vase for its double dose of spring: It displays flowers in sculptural form on the outside, even if it's not holding live flowers on the inside (\$84-\$568, www.janusetcie.com). "If there's a pretty masculine space and you want to soften it a little bit, this is a great way to do it," she says.



JAMES CHEN



DESIGNERS GUILD

● Both Welch and Mitchell like using tone-on-tone floral patterns. "A lot of times you see two-tone florals and they're black-and-white; they have this graphicness," Mitchell says. But there's a lot of beautiful florals that have a tone-on-tone effect that aren't black-and-white. For a dramatic statement, Welch picked out the Charlottenberg Porcelain duvet cover from Designers Guild, a company that Imre also loves (\$300-\$325, www.designersguild.com).

● Thomas Paul's Botanical Pillow gives a vintage drawing a modern twist. "I like the reference to Victorian botanical drawings reinterpreted in a digitally printed fabric," Imre says. (\$104, www.yliving.com). If a painterly, watercolor floral is more your thing, Imre says to find it in a digitally printed pattern for an update on tradition. "It's still the techniques and fabrics that [the pattern] is presented on that will make it feel quite new."



YLIVING



JOHN DERIAN CO.

● For a delicate touch on a dresser, nightstand or end table, New Yorker John Derian's decoupage is a must. Artisans take antique and vintage prints and affix them to handblown glass. The Papaver Pair tray (\$145, www.johnderian.com) "showcases florals at their prettiest," Imre

says. "The glass emphasizes the delicate details of the blooms, and the colors are soft and feminine."



WISTERIA

● The exotic bone-inlaid Jaipur Mirror in black "is modern, but it's also traditional," Mitchell says. "You could put it in an all-beige room and it would add edge to it." As with fashion, it's hard to go wrong with decorating in black and white — but if you already have a vibrant home, there's no need to gild the lily. "You could put [the mirror] in a colorful room and make all your lampshades black, and that would look great, too," Mitchell says (\$499, also available in gray, www.wisteria.com).



FARROW & BALL

● Mixing floral prints can be tricky. "There's a fine line between good and what starts to get a little crazy," Welch says. "Sometimes we say, 'Here's the trend, and here's what you can do, and here's how to do it,' but it's really about what you can live with." But Farrow & Ball, she says, always gets floral wallpaper right. She suggests the classic English pattern in the company's Wisteria paper, drawn from 19th-century jacquards (\$260 for a 10-meter roll, www.farrowandball.com). Imre is considering a similar monochrome wallpaper from Designers Guild for her bedroom.



RUG COMPANY

● Another way of modernizing a floral print, Imre says, is by finding one that zooms in on the flower, showing only parts. Also, "there's a big trend at the moment in oversized florals," she says. Vivienne Westwood, a British design icon, created this cropped, oversize Magnolia Ice Wool & Silk hand-knotted Tibetan rug for the Rug Company (\$218 per square foot, www.rugcompany.com). It's a show-stopping splurge. "I love the super scale of the flowers and the flash of green against the elegant cream," Imre says. The rug design is also available with a black background (wool only) and available for custom orders.



TERRAIN

● "Fresh flowers are my favorite way to go," Welch says. She suggests buying lots of one flower, such as roses or tulips, instead of a mixed arrangement. Four-packs of tulips will make "a large impact," she says. To make the look even more contemporary, cut the flowers down to fit in a low vase, using stones to anchor the stems in place. For something that lasts a bit longer than a bouquet, Welch likes the Tulip Magnolia Branches from Terrain (\$58, www.shopterrain.com).